

John 15:12-17

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[0 : 00] The sermon text for today is John 15, 12-17. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

These things I command you so that you will love one another. Father, as we sang earlier, would you speak, O Lord?

God, this is your holy, inerrant, all-sufficient word for our lives. God, we pray that you would plant this truth deep into our hearts.

God, that you would shape us and fashion us into your likeness. And God, that through your word, you would do what you have been doing from the dawn of time, which is building a people for yourself.

Building a people to image you in the world and to glorify you. So, Lord, we come to this word, God, with expectancy, with reverence, with the desire that you would speak to us now.

[1 : 46] We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Might just give you the head nod, Josiah. Well, good morning, church.

My name is Mike. I'm one of the elders here at Shoreline. And I'm so glad that you all have joined us this morning. I've seen a few people that I haven't met before. So, if you haven't met me, I would love to meet you after the service.

Again, Ryan, welcome back. For those that don't know, Ryan was deployed overseas for over a year, right? For a long time. 11 months, close to a year. And so, we are so glad to have Ryan back with us.

Well, as a lowly employee in past jobs of mine, I sometimes felt more like a servant and wondered what it would be like to be in that room.

I don't know if you know what I mean. Like, around that table. Do you know what I'm talking about? You know, like when the manager and the supervisors go behind closed doors and shut the door, or maybe the captain and his officers, for those that are in the military, you know, what are their conversations like?

[2 : 50] You know, I would wonder this to myself. What are they scheming up in there? You know, is the coffee better in that room than out here? You know, for all my wondering, I was mostly left in the dark. And you know, the disparity that happens in the workplace isn't just something we feel there, right?

There's a disparity that we feel in the world. And we read about it in Scripture, right? Because in Genesis chapter 3, we see that the fall of man happens.

And sin brings, as Tim Keller says, total alienation. Total alienation. Our relationship with God is broken. Our relationship with mankind is broken.

And so, we feel that disparity in all of our relationships, do we not? But you know, Paul says in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 13, But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ, right?

And our text for today in John's Gospel, it invites us to marvel at that truth, that in Christ, we are not left on the outside, right?

[4 : 00] Wondering what goes on in there. But we have been brought in. We have been brought into a divine fellowship, a friendship with Christ, and therefore, also with one another.

So for several weeks now, we have been listening to Jesus as he instructs his closest disciples in what is known as the farewell discourse. We've been walking through this now. And he's been preparing them for what is to come, right?

His death, his resurrection, his ascension, and then all the trials that they're going to face as the fledgling church. And he does so by comforting them. We saw that especially in chapter 14. Let not your hearts be troubled, right? He does so by expounding on what it looks like to be a true follower of his. So last week, we looked at chapter 15, verses 1 through 11. And we saw there, Jesus declared his seventh and final I am statement, right? I am the true vine, and you are the branches. And today, we're looking just at verses 12 through 17, which ties in with that vine and branches metaphor.

[5 : 07] And the main point of today's sermon, and I believe the main point of these six verses, is this, that Jesus' disciples are marked by the abiding fruit and friendship of love.

Jesus' disciples are marked by the abiding fruit and friendship of love. So we see this passage. It's bookended by Christ's command to his disciples to love one another, right?

In verse 12 and verse 17, Jesus says to love one another. Specifically at the beginning, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Now, we already saw this, right? Brother Jim Gancards was up here several weeks ago from chapter 13, verses 34 and 35. We saw Jesus telling us that it would be Christ-like sacrificial love that would define disciples of Jesus Christ, right?

Now, here in this text, particularly in the middle four verses, Jesus expounds, he elaborates on what that love actually looks like. What does the love of Christ look like?

[6 : 14] And so that's where we're going to start today in the sermon. Let's give it one more chance. Nope. Okay. It's all you, Josiah. And here's the first part of the sermon. It's Jesus' friendship of love.

And here's the first sub-point, that Jesus lays down his life for his disciples. Verse 13, Jesus says, greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Now, I know it's only the beginning of the sermon, but I hope that by everything that's gone on already, the reading of the word, the singing of the word, the praying, that our hearts are primed to receive this truth right here, to marvel at this truth.

We've seen in John that the Father has loved the Son from eternity past, right? The Father has shared himself completely with the Son. And then Jesus has been sharing himself with the disciples, right?

He's come to love the disciples with the same love that the Father has had for him, right? And he's shared himself completely with them. And he's about to do that in a far more profound way than he has yet, right?

[7 : 26] Now, Jesus has spoken about this. He's pointed forward to it over and over again in the Gospel of John about his coming death on the cross for the sins of the world. And now he says it again, one more time, pointing forward to his imminent crucifixion.

He's about to die on the cross only hours from right now. And here in this parting discourse, he's pointing them back to that event, which is to come, right? His death on the cross.

Now, what's crazy is that this death on the cross is completely unconstrained, right? Completely. He is under no obligation whatsoever. And that's something we're going to talk about in the idea of a friendship.

There is no obligation whatsoever. Christ lays down his life under his own accord. We've talked about this over and over again in John. He does so willingly, right? By his own authority.

Unconstrained. Also, this death on the cross, it's totally unmerited, right? What do you and I, what do mankind, what do the 11 disciples have to bring to Jesus to deserve that kind of love?

[8 : 28] Nothing, right? Nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to the cross I cling. There is nothing in mankind that compels that kind of love.

Now, see, Jesus' death on the cross, it reveals to mankind his heart of selfless, sacrificial, outgoing love, right?

Not outgoing in terms of bubbly and lively, but like flowing out of the heart of God is this radical, boundless love for mankind. He shares himself completely with his disciples, even unto death on the cross.

And we know, we've seen that Jesus is the revelation of God the Father, right? Jesus is revealing and in clear display what the heart of God is actually like.

So God is a God of love, of radical, selfless, humbling, outgoing love. That is who God is. He is love.

[9 : 31] And Jesus is saying here, right, that the highest form of love is for one to lay oneself down, lay one's life down for the sake of the beloved.

And that's what Jesus is about to do for his disciples. He lays down his life for his disciples. We remember in John chapter 10, Jesus saying that I am the good shepherd, right?

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Lays down his life for the sheep. So he's the good shepherd laying down his life for the sheep.

And he's also, we see in this text, the friend. The friend laying down his life for friends. And that brings us to the next point that Jesus invites his disciples from mere servanthood into a friendship of intimacy.

Let's look at the next couple verses. He says, Now, it's interesting.

[10 : 46] As I study this text, when I hear about friendship, I instantly contrast that with being an enemy, right? From enemy to friend. Now, it is absolutely true that we were enemies of God.

Romans 5.8. We have been moved from enemy to friend, right? Now, I also think, so Jesus says, I don't call you servants anymore. And yet, in the very next text that Andrew's going to preach, he calls the disciples servants.

And in chapter 13, after the foot washing, he said that you are servants, right? The servant is not greater than his master. It is true that disciples of Jesus are his servants. It is true that we were his enemies and are now his friends.

But Jesus is doing something here with this contrast. There's a specific thing. He's moving us from servanthood to friendship. So we've got to consider, what is it about servanthood and friendship that Jesus is pointing at?

So if we just think for a second, like, what does it mean to be a servant in relation to the master?

Like, a relationship from the servant to the master, it's just utilitarian, right?

[11 : 47] The servant does what the master tells him to do. There's no intimacy there, right? It's not a shared life. It's the master says something and the servant carries it out.

You might consider, well, Jesus was a rabbi, right? He was the rabbi of his disciples, the teacher. And in those days, that relationship was not an intimate one. The teachers followed their rabbi, but there wasn't a sharing of life.

There wasn't an intimacy. We have some teachers in this room, right? You might think about the relationship that you have with the students, right? Or maybe when we were students, thinking about the relationship we have with the teachers.

The teacher would give us instructions. We would follow them if we were good students. But the teacher would go back to the break room and then share with his teacher friends or her teacher friends, what was really going on in the classroom.

And there was an intimacy there among the teachers that didn't exist between teacher and students, right? So Jesus is saying, I have brought you into friendship. I have called you friends because among friends there is intimacy, right?

[12 : 49] Think about in your minds. Picture who is a close friend of yours. What kind of intimacy is there among friends, right? Friends are let in to one another's lives, right?

There's a mutual sharing. They share each other's joys and their struggles. They carry each other's burdens, right? And they celebrate each other's victories. There's mutual love that goes on between friends.

And it's not obligated, right? That's one difference between the familial relationship. Christ is a brother. We are sons of the Father. These are true things. But we are also friends.

We are also friends. And it conveys a different sense of our relationship with Christ under no obligation. He has welcomed us in to a shared life of intimacy.

Now, the proof of this is the second half of verse 15, right? He says, But I have called you friends for, so this is what proves it, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

[13 : 48] See, Jesus has been disclosing himself, right? His very heart, his very self, the very plan of the Father, the redemptive plan of the Father with his disciples.

So his disciples have been brought into this shared divine life, right? Between Father and Son. Here they are, right, in the upper room or walking through Jerusalem right now as they got up.

But they're with Christ, just the 11 of them being, Jesus sharing all of these things with just them in an intimate way, right? So that the knowledge and the love of Father and Son are being shared with the disciples.

And that's going to happen in an even fuller way after Pentecost, right? When the Holy Spirit comes and makes his home in his disciples. Psalm 25, verse 14 says this, The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.

Now, this, that verse in the Psalms was depicted by Abraham, right? And by Moses. So throughout Scripture, particularly Isaiah 41, 8, but in other parts of Scripture, Abraham is called the friend of God, right?

[15:11] God actually made known to Abraham his plans for Sodom and Gomorrah. And Abraham spoke regularly with God, right? And the Jews in the first century highly esteemed Abraham.

We saw this back in chapter 8 and in other parts of John. And then Moses. Actually, Randy was here last year preaching from Exodus 33, that Moses would go to the tent of meeting and he would speak face to face with God as a man speaks to his friend.

And you read about Moses and all the time he's going before the Lord. He's speaking with the Lord, speaking boldly with the Lord. There was a friendship there. And again, the Jews in the first century, they highly esteemed Moses, right?

Abraham, Moses. They were the ideal followers of God, of Yahweh. And Jesus is now saying, that is you. In Christ, in me, that is you.

You are a friend of God. A friend of God. You have been let in like Abraham, like Moses, who spoke face to face with God.

[16:11] You've been let in. And now we have something better. We have the Spirit in us. The dwelling place of Father and Son in the Spirit right here. Right here.

We are friends of God. The third thing. Jesus chooses and appoints his disciples in an act of sovereign love.

Now this is verse 16. Let's look at verse 16. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you. Stop there.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you. Now Jesus' 11 disciples and us in this room and every human being that's ever walked the earth, we already talked about it, they had no merit, right?

We are all sinners. Back to Genesis 3, right? The fall of man. We're born in Adam. We are born steeped in sin, separated from God.

[17:20] We had no merit of our own. Right? We had no even ability. We had no ability to choose God apart from him. Like we were, we've talked about this too, over, throughout the book of John.

We were dead in our trespasses, Ephesians chapter 2, right? We were dead in our trespasses. We could not do anything. Now see, God always makes the first move in redemption.

He always makes the first move. God always makes the first move. I mean, in creation, he spoke and things came to be. He made the first move. He brought forth life and breath and everything that we see.

And he makes the first move in redemption according to his sovereign love and grace. He is the divine initiator. The divine initiator.

I mean, if you just think about the history of things, like God spoke and created, right? God called Abram to himself, right? God formed, God formed a people for his own possession, the nation of Israel, right?

[18:23] God gave them the law on the tablet, did he not? God brought them into the land and wiped out the nations that were before him to give them the promised land. God sent prophets to call them back to himself, to speak his words to them and beckon them back in.

And God sent Christ to rescue mankind so that we could be his friends. And even now, he is sending the spirit to breathe life into these dry bones, to awaken them to life.

God always makes the first move. It's his sovereign love. It's his sovereign grace. He chose the disciples and he appointed them for their task. 1 John 4, 9, and 10.

John says this, the Apostle John in his letter to the church. In this, the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Church, we have been shown radical, outgoing, selfless, sacrificial, sovereign love by the eternal creator God, right?

[19:49] The king of the universe who laid down his life for our sake, who has chosen us and appointed us, who has befriended us under no obligation whatsoever.

However, if you're a follower of Jesus this morning, if you believe in Christ as your Lord and Savior, then you are a son, you are a servant, and you are also his friend.

You're also his friend. Now maybe you're here this morning and you're going through a trial, right? There are so many trials going on in this church all at the same time, and this is a word of comfort that we have a friend, right?

Proverbs 18.24 says that there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother, and that is Christ, right? Even more than a brother. I don't know if any of you have brothers that you're close with.

Even more than the bond of a brother. Sometimes it's not a great bond, but the ideal brother is one that sticks close. Jesus is a friend who sticks even closer through any trial, through any suffering.

[20 : 54] He is there. He will not leave you. He will not forsake you. What a friend he is. And consider that I was reading a Spurgeon sermon yesterday, and Spurgeon talks about how when Christ died on the cross, he already knew everything about you.

All of your flaws, all of your sins, all the ugliness of your heart. But he already knew all of it, and he still chose you. There's nothing that you could do that would remove his love from you, right?

He is with us as a friend, and he will not forsake us. I mean, that's a word, too, for sinners. Maybe you're here, and you're struggling with some sort of sin that keeps getting you down over and over again.

You can't beat it. First of all, I mean, welcome to being human. But sometimes it leaves us feeling guilty, right, and shameful. And we just sang, no guilt in life, right?

No fear in death. This is the power of Christ in me. That's a word to sinners, right? That's a word to sufferers. That Christ will not leave us. And he holds us in the palm of his hand.

[22 : 00] Does he not? Those that he's called to himself, he keeps. And nobody can snatch us away. You know, sometimes we sing the song, Let There Be Wonder, and verse 2 of that song, it says, we are in awe, and we fear your name, but we will not be afraid, right?

Why? For the king and his holiness is our father and our friend. And our friend. So I do want to ask you all, are you living merely as a distant servant of Christ, or are you living in intimate fellowship with him?

Are you living as an intimate friend of Christ? Because you have been brought into that friendship. That's the access you now have, is friendship with Christ, not merely servanthood.

Are you living as a friend of Christ? And church, are we beckoning the world into this beautiful friendship that we have with Christ?

Are we asking people to join us in this? We have something so profoundly rich and sweet in friendship with the living God, with Christ Jesus.

[23 : 13] We cannot keep it to ourselves. We cannot. This is why we're here on earth. Did you know that? Like, this is why we're here, is to proclaim the glories of the gospel and bring sinners into the family, the church, the friendship that Christ has brought us into.

That's why we're here. We've got to be doing that. We've got to be doing that. So just think about one person that you could pray for this week. One person that doesn't know Christ. And would you begin to pray that they too would become a friend of God?

Just pray and the Lord will lead you. He will. If that's your prayer, he's going to lead you. He's going to open up conversations. And in time, Lord willing, there will be fruit. Okay?

And it might take years, decades even. That's the kind of prayer that he wants us to be praying. And if you're here this morning and you don't know Christ, that offer of friendship is there.

He knows you fully. And he has loved you fully. And he has died for you so that you could be a friend of his for eternity.

[24 : 17] And there is nothing as sweet as friendship with Christ. There's truly nothing. So we've done a first pass of these verses focusing on Christ's love for us, right?

And drawing us into friendship with himself. And now we're going to do a second pass and we're going to focus on this command that Jesus gives his disciples to love one another as I have loved you.

So here's the second part. It's the disciples' fruit of love. The first thing under this, love for others is an actionable command.

It's an actionable command. Now let's look. Three different verses in this. Verse 12. This is my commandment, right? That you love one another as I have loved you. Now down in verse 14, he says, you are my friends if you do what I command you.

These things I command you, as he wraps it up in verse 17, so that you will love one another. So we see here that love for others is an action, right?

[25 : 22] It's an action that replicates Christ's love for us, right? Love for others is an action. It's something that we do. And it means inviting. So if we just looked at Christ's love for us, Jesus is saying love with that same kind of love, right?

And Christ has invited us into a shared life, right? A shared friendship. Christ has shown us this selfless, sacrificial, outgoing love.

And he's saying, hey, you go do that now with one another. That kind of love. Inviting one another in to a shared life. And even being willing to lay down our lives for one another.

If that is what, if that's what it comes to. And if we do that, if we love one another like that, then we are replicating the divine nature, right?

The divine love between Father and Son. We're replicating that. And that's, I mean, that's crazy. So again, the Father has loved the Son with all of himself.

[26 : 24] The Son has loved his disciples with all of himself. And now the disciples are called to love one another with all of ourselves. It's an action.

It replicates Christ's love for us. It's an action that we choose to do, right? That we choose to do. Love is not primarily a feeling that we can't control, that we have to, like, conjure up.

It is primarily a choice of the will. This sounds craziness to the world, okay? Like, that's not what the world thinks about love. Love is primarily a choice of the will for the good of the beloved.

It's a choice that we make. Jesus loved his disciples by doing, right? We looked at this. When Ben preached from the foot-washing passage, he showed us all of the really tangible action verbs that you kids helped call out.

Like, all those actions. We are called to love tangibly, right? With acts of love. John will say in 1 John 3, 18, Little children, let us not love in word or talk, right?

[27 : 30] There's a lot of talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, right? About loving one another. But let us love in deed and in truth. Like, let us love actually with tangible acts that people can see and feel, right?

Tangible acts of love. So it's an action that replicates Christ's love for us. It's an action that we choose to do in finding love for others. And when I say love for others, you know, I mean Christ-like love for others, right?

That's the adjective that we're talking about this whole time. It's Christ's outgoing, radical, selfless love. That kind of love for others is an action that proves our discipleship.

Proves our discipleship. We looked at chapter 14 a couple weeks ago, and three different times Jesus said something similar. He said, If you love me, you will keep my commandments, right?

If you love Christ, you will obey his commandments out of love for him. That's the proof of our love. It's the obedience to his commandments. In chapter 15, we looked at last week, verse 8, he said, But this, by this, my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and what?

[28 : 42] And so prove to be my disciples. And then in verse 10, he said, If you keep my commandments, if you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love. So Jesus is saying that this love for others, it proves our discipleship in Christ, right?

And we need to be clear, though, that this is not a prerequisite to faith in Christ. Because again, we were dead. We could not love Christ.

We could not love others. We had no ability of our own. This is the necessary result of being in Christ. Those who are in Christ bear the fruit, as they abide in Christ, of love.

And we're going to talk more about fruit further down. But this is an outworking of our love for Christ. So this really is a test, right? This is a litmus test of our discipleship.

If it's this Christ-like love for others that proves we are his disciples, right? That confirms our love for Jesus, then we ought to be evaluating the state of our hearts and the state of our love for others, right?

[29 : 53] Whether we are actually loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, who are also our friends in Christ. 1 John 3, 14. Again, going back to 1 John. If you didn't know, 1 John is like, it's like an exposition of John 14 and 15.

Just the same themes over and over and over again. And it's beautiful. But John says, we know that we have passed out of death into life. How?

How do we know? Because we have this warm, fuzzy feeling of spirituality? Because we love the brothers. That's what John says. We know that we have passed out of death into life because we

love the brothers.

If you love me, if you love Christ, you will obey his commandments. The commandment is to love one another, right? Now, the opposite is also true.

There's a warning here in this text. There's a warning all throughout 1 John. Like four or five different times, he says something very similar. He repeatedly reminds the church that if the presence of love for one another proves faith, then the absence of love for one another shows that you don't belong in the family of God.

[31 : 05] John says, 1 John 3, 10, by this it is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

That's a warning. That's a warning to us. That was a warning to the early church that you cannot say you love God and then walk in the darkness, right? You can't say, I love Christ, and then hate your brother who is right in front of you, right?

This is a warning to the church and a test of our faith, right? Whether or not we actually love Christ, it will be evident in how we love one another, right? And our love is not perfect by any means and it never will be.

And we'll talk more about that further down. But that's the first thing. Love for others is an actionable command. And here's the next thing. Love for others is an awakened response.

It's an awakened response. Jesus says in verse 12, again, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. He has loved us first.

[32 : 14] Greater love has no one than this, that someone laid down his life for his friends. In verse 15, he says, no longer do I call you servants, but I have called you friends. He's making the first move. Verse 16, you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you, right?

We talked about God is the divine initiator. And what we see here is that it's Christ's love for us in the gospel that's not just a model to follow, but it's actually the enlivening power that awakens love in us by the Spirit.

Right? The love of Christ in the gospel, it's the kindling of the soul that the Spirit then sets aflame in our hearts with love for Christ and love for others.

As we behold the glory of Jesus, right, in the gospels, we behold his glory. We are transformed into his image and his likeness.

Like our desires and our affections, they're changed. They become like his. We become more and more like Christ as we gaze on his beauty and wonder and love in the gospel.

[33 : 26] See, Jesus doesn't just love us and then tell us to love others. He also makes us loving. Right? He makes us loving. He makes us into rivers of living water.

Right? It's the Spirit's work in us, overflowing, outgoing to other people. Christ does that. He forms that in us. So that command to go love, it's empowered by Christ.

He awakens us to love. John Calvin wrote this, Christ sometimes proclaims the greatness of his love to us that he may more fully confirm our confidence in our salvation.

But now he proceeds further in order to inflame us by his example to love the brethren. Yet he joins both together for he means that we should taste by faith how inestimably delightful his goodness is. And next he allures us in this way to cultivate brotherly love. So the love of Christ, it awakens in us. Love for others.

[34 : 34] Third thing is that love for others is an abiding fruit. It's an abiding fruit. Back in verse 16, Jesus says, you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.

That your fruit should abide. So here Jesus, he's connecting back to the discussion that we had last week, right, on the vine and the branches metaphor. The reason, the reason that he's chosen us, the reason that he's appointed us is to go and bear abiding fruit, right, to become these abundantly fruitful branches that are ever producing rich and delightful fruit.

And the chief fruit, as we see in these verses, the chief fruit is love for one another. Christ-like, overflowing, outgoing, selfless love for one another.

That's the chief fruit of a disciple of Christ. Now, to make this connection clear, I want to reread some of the previous passage. Verse 8, if you've got your Bibles open, look at verse 8.

Jesus said, by this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. Oh yeah, it's up here too. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

[35 : 55] Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. And what is his commandment?

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. So do you see the connection here? Right? We are brought into Christ, into friendship with Christ, and called to abide in Christ.

Right? And as we abide in Christ, we produce fruit. As we abide in Christ's love, another synonym that Dave talked about last week, abiding in Christ, abiding in his word, abiding in his love, all of these things.

As we do that, we bear fruit, and that fruit involves keeping his commandments, and his commandment is to love one another. Right? That's the connection here. The abiding fruit of love is what happens as we abide in Christ and his love.

And it happens only as we abide in Christ and his love. This kind of love is not produced in any other way than by abiding in Christ.

[37 : 05] So it follows then that if loving one another like Jesus is the chief fruit produced in the lives of his disciples, right, who are abiding in him, then it is also the chief way that we prove to be Christ's disciples, right, which we already talked about.

And it's also the chief way that we bear witness to Christ before the world. Right? John 13, 35, By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

Jim talked about it's like the jersey that we wear, right, that identifies us. People see the jersey, the Chicago Bears jersey, and, I'm kidding, he had to make a reference to the Packers and he's not even here.

different. It's the jersey that we wear. People see the love that we have for one another and it identifies us as his, as Christ's disciples.

And you know what's crazy? You all ladies are going to be in Ephesians 3 this week. It's not just before the watching world that we bear witness. It's actually greater than that. You know what Paul says in Ephesians 3?

[38 : 11] Paul says that he's become the bearer of the gospel, basically, right? He preaches the unsearchable riches of Christ and further down he says, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Like, to the cosmos through the church. So the church lives out the gospel, right? And then to the watching world and to all of the cosmos, to angels and to demons and it's the love, primarily the love that we have for one another in the gospel of Jesus Christ that proclaims that we are truly in him.

It proclaims the glory of Christ, right? To tear down the dividing wall, Ephesians 2, and to unite us as one person in Christ. This is amazing. So it's the love, the one another love that we have.

It is a witness to the world. It is a witness even to angels and to demons. love for others is an abiding fruit.

An abiding fruit. And you know, we often think very individualistically in this country. So we've got to think also corporately. Jesus is talking to his 11 disciples and to the whole church.

[39 : 31] This fruit of love for one another is an abiding fruit and Jesus, by the Spirit, ensures that corporately and in the capital C church, this love will abide.

And the proof of that is the last 2,000 years. Right? Like the gospel has gone forward under the sovereign power of God and he is ensuring that this fruit remains in the church.

And that's just amazing. It's an abiding fruit. Fourth and final thing here is that love for others is an assuring confidence.

It's an assuring confidence. He says, you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

Let that sink in. Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

[40 : 44] Now this promise should sound very familiar to those that have been here. Ryan, I'll give you a pass. You just came back. But we talked about this in January, right, during our prayer series.

And Jesus has already spoken this promise now twice in his farewell discourse. Including the last week's text that Dave just preached on. And he's going to say the same thing again in chapter 16.

Right? So four times in the farewell discourse, he gives us this promise. So this should be familiar to us. Now we've been talking about this. Jesus is conditioning his disciples to know how to pray in

Jesus' name.

Right? How do we do that? How to pray prayers that actually receive the thing asked. That's what he's conditioning us to do. And to pray in Jesus' name, as Dave Moynihan said last week, it's to invoke the power of attorney.

Right? It's availing ourselves of Christ's divine access before the Father. And it means that we're praying prayers that are consistent with his character and his concerns.

[41 : 52] That's what he's been showing us this whole time. Right? In chapter 14, we saw that a prayer in Jesus' name, it's a prayer that longs for the mission and the ministry of Christ to be advanced in the world. Right?

Through the church, that God would perform greater works than these by his Spirit. That's a prayer in Jesus' name. His ministry, his mission, carried out in the world by the Spirit. Last week, in verse 17 of chapter 15, we saw a prayer in Jesus' name.

It's a prayer from a heart that is abiding in Christ and his word. Right? And that longs for fruit to be produced to the glory of the Father. That's a prayer in Jesus' name.

A prayer that longs for those things. And so now, in a very similar way, we see that a prayer in Jesus' name is a prayer from a fruitful heart of Christ-like love for fellow believers.

Right? And one that desires more Christ-like love to be produced and manifested in the church for one another. You know, I thought of, it's like you coming to the Lord and saying, Lord, I believe.

[42 : 54] Help my unbelief. Or like, I have love for the brethren. I need love for the brothers. Right? I have love for my fellow believers in Christ, but I need love for my fellow believers in Christ.

So similarly, right, that's what's going on here. If Christ-like love for others is the condition of our hearts, right, and the content of our prayers, then we can have this assuring confidence right here that the Father is going to answer our prayers.

So it is the condition of our hearts and at the same time the content of our prayers and the Father is going to answer those kinds of prayers. Those are prayers in Jesus' name.

Like, it's okay to pray for other things. It's okay to pray for healing. It's okay to pray that you would do well on your test, but the prayers that are guaranteed by the Father, by Christ, the prayers that have His powerful backing are these kinds of prayers.

His mission, His ministry, the fruit that brings glory to the Father, Christ-like love for other people.

Guys, we've got to be praying prayers like these. These are the prayers that receive the thing asked.

[44 : 02] These kinds of prayers. It's a power that we have access to in Christ. And this, I mean, this kind of power that we have access to, it underscores the joyful and abundant life that we have been invited and enabled to have in friendship with God.

Right? Through His death on the cross, Jesus has revealed this radical, outgoing love for us. And He has extended us the hand of friendship and fellowship.

And now, He empowers us and He calls us to display that same radical and intimate love for one another as we abide in Him and His love.

So Jesus' disciples are marked by the abiding fruit and friendship of love. We're marked by this. The abiding fruit and friendship of love.

Now, what would it look like for us as a church if we embodied this? I want you to like get a vision in your heads. What would it look like if we all embodied this kind of love?

[45 : 16] You know, it certainly isn't less than bringing people meals. Right? It's not less than helping them with house projects and giving them rides. Those are tangible ways that we love one another in deed and in truth.

But I want to also say, like, let's not stop there. Because Christ-like love is far deeper. It is far richer. It is far more profound still.

Right? The divine love we've been talking about, it's a love that shares oneself completely with the beloved. The father sharing himself with the son. The son sharing himself with his disciples.

And now us embodying that divine love with one another. Like, we've been invited into the friendship, the fellowship of the triune God so that we might enjoy that same friendship with one another.

together. Now friends, this is what discipleship is. It's this. This is what discipleship is. It's not just some formal sit-down over coffee where you have a structured plan and a structured book that you're reading.

[46 : 27] It's sharing life together. That's discipleship. It's hospitality. Right? It's letting others into the mundane moments of your life and the defining moments of your life.

It's allowing others to walk with you through your highs and your lows, sharing with one another your joys and your struggles, your dreams and your plans. It's opening up heart and home to one another.

That's discipleship. So I want to ask, who are you discipling? And who's discipling you? I want everybody to think about that question. Who are you discipling?

And who is discipling you? And if you don't know where to start, come talk to me or one of the elders. Like we would love to help connect this church together into more mutual, outgoing, loving friendships where we are discipling one another, being disciplined and discipling.

And again, it's not a, we always think like discipling, oh formal, that takes a lot of effort. No, it's like invite somebody over to just hang out while the kids are, you know, running amok and have conversation in between the crazy moments.

[47 : 38] You know, it's just, it's bringing people into the moments of your life. I've got to split wood. Hey, hey, want to come over and split wood with me? I get help and we can have intentional conversation at the same time.

Right? It's just being intentional with one another in all the moments of our lives. Sure, it can look and sometimes does look more formal and structured and I think that's called for at times. But by and large, it's just the little moments of life where we're letting one another in.

And again, thinking about the lost that are out there, they're not in here. What unbelievers are you praying for and are you seeking to pull in to this community?

Right? That they might see this Christ-like love on display and then they themselves be drawn into friendship with Christ and with one another. Now, it should be acknowledged here, like there's some real factors that prevent us from this kind of love, are there not?

There's real factors. Like maybe you've had past relational hurt from opening yourself up to somebody in the church. That's a real factor that hurts, that hinders our love for one another.

[48 : 55] I think in all of us we could say selfishness. You know, that's just going to cost a little bit too much. I'm not willing to be inconvenienced in that sort of way.

Maybe it's a desire for comfort, which is one specific form of selfishness. You know, that's just really outside my comfort zone. It's kind of awkward, so I don't want to go there. There's roadblocks to loving one another with Christ-like love.

And we can't ignore them because they're real. But church, we can't accept them either. We can't accept them as being valid reasons not to love one another. And you know what?

The gospel of Jesus Christ and his radical love for us is like a bulldozer bulldozing over those obstacles. Past relational hurt. Consider how profoundly Jesus was hurt as he consistently opened himself up to the world, right?

Betrayed by one of his disciples, denied by another disciple, rejected by the ones he came to save, and then hung on the cross. He has experienced hurt far more profound than you will ever experience in this life.

[50 : 02] And he has befriended you. He's befriended you. The gospel is a bulldozer. It bulldozes past these obstacles. If we pour ourselves into it and study it and meditate on it and pray through it, selfishness, that's a real obstacle that I battle constantly.

But consider how great the cost that Christ bore for us. How inconvenient, right, for Christ to go to the cross, to come down to earth, to give up the glories of heaven, to die willingly.

How inconvenient, how costly was that act of love, desire for comfort? Guys, Christ forsook all worldly comfort in this life and in his death for the sake of befriending love for us.

gospel is a bulldozer and prayer in Jesus' name is the engine, right? And the Holy Spirit is the gasoline. He's the fuel. And with those three things, the gospel, praying in Jesus' name, and the Spirit's power, we have the ability then to bulldoze past those roadblocks and to actually love one another with Christ-like, sacrificial love that he calls us to.

And I want to close by just going back to one question that I asked earlier in this sermon. Are we living like merely distant servants of Christ or are we living like his intimate friends?

[51 : 40] Are we living like his friends? Guys, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords has taken us from off the streets, right? Like we were paupers living in tattered clothing.

He's taken us from off the streets. He has cleansed us with his royal blood. He has clothed us with robes of righteousness and he's given us a seat at his table of friendship and of fellowship, right? He has shown us this radical, selfless, sacrificial, outgoing love to befriend us, even us. And by his love, we are awakened and then actioned to display that same Christ-like, divine love to others, right?

To one another. That is the abiding fruit that showcases the beauty of Christ to the world. It showcases the beauty of the gospel to the cosmos, right?

For the glory of God. The beautiful picture of Christ befriending love and I pray that Christ would work that in us. Let's pray. Oh God, what love is this that we should be called children of God?

[52 : 58] And not only children, but also friends. we who once were far off as you have brought near by the blood of Christ.

You've broken down the dividing walls of hostility between us and you and between us and one another brought in to this beautiful friendship of divine love.

God, awaken us. Awaken us this morning to marvel at your love for us and awaken love in us for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

God, this is the defining mark of Christians. This is the thing that ought to set us apart in the world. Our love for one another. God, I pray that you would reveal to each one of us how to put this into practice this week, even today.

How to love one another with a befriending love, an outgoing love. This is what you've done for us and you call us to this same thing.

[54 : 16] And God, I pray as Paul prays in Ephesians 3, God, that we would have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and the length and the height and the depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge that we would be filled with all the fullness of God.

God, let that happen by your spirit. It's your power, your spirit at work in us to show us to show us Christ and to fill us with his fullness and his love.

So do that, for your glory we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.